

# MFRI 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

MARYLAND FIRE AND RESCUE INSTITUTE • UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND







## LETTER FROM MFRI DIRECTOR EDWARDS

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In the year 2015 the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute is celebrating its 85th year of providing fire, rescue and EMS training within Maryland and beyond. Our success has been based on the contributions of many individuals and organizations over these years. Our gratitude and thanks are extended to all who have been dedicated and have worked hard to make our training and educational system for emergency responders a program of which we can all be proud.



Even though we have a history to be proud of, it is clear that organizations, in order to remain relevant, have to change and provide a new direction as time moves forward. Organizations who do not change and adapt at some point fail. MFRI has had success and I think we do a good job of planning and most importantly listening to our students and instructors. However, it is now time to establish a new strategic direction that will drive our programs and services for the next decade.

As you will note in the MFRI 2025 Strategic Plan, many of the existing MFRI practices and policies will remain, but we have examined them in the context of the future and will continue those that are the most effective and change others to optimize performance. You will also note the addition of many new initiatives that will strengthen and improve student success over time. Our main goal is to have a conceptual plan at the strategic level that is concise and to the point that will be achieved over time. I have no interest in creating a huge planning document that will just sit on the shelf.

Key to the success of this planning effort was the input and advice from many students, instructors, and organizations from throughout Maryland. Our main organizational focus is on student success and this is demonstrated by our new organizational vision and values.

I am very pleased with the strategic planning process and the level of interest and activity demonstrated throughout the state to make this a relevant and functional plan that will determine the future direction of MFRI. My sincere thanks and appreciation to all who have participated in this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. T. Edwards".



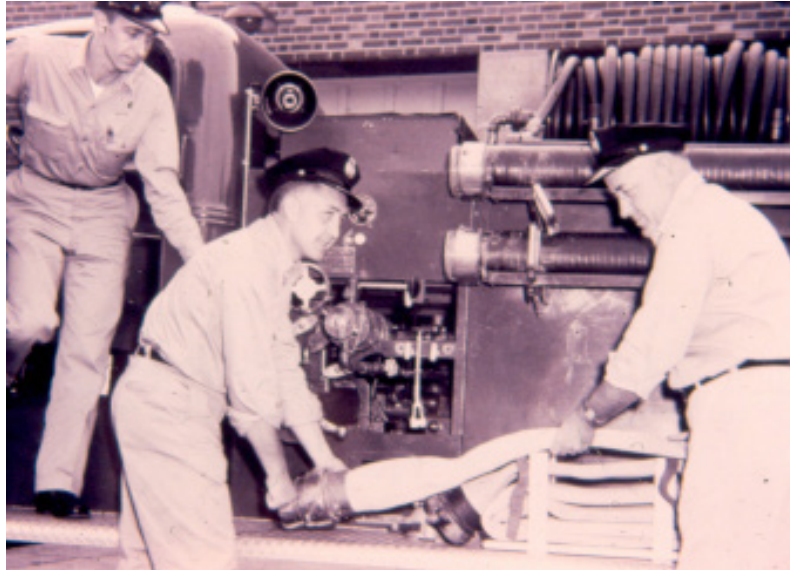
## THE MARYLAND FIRE AND RESCUE INSTITUTE AT A GLANCE

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In 2015, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute of the University of Maryland marks 85 years of providing fire, rescue and emergency medical training and education regionally, nationally and internationally.

Founded in 1930 and known as the Fire College, the state's fire service training program was a part of the University of Maryland's College of Engineering and offered "short courses" until 1937, when MFRI's predecessor, the Fire Service Extension Department, began offering courses statewide. In 1975, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that created the Maryland

Fire and Rescue Institute. This mandate expanded the role of the state's emergency services training program to address specialized training, including industrial firefighting and disaster training; research and development; and development, implementation and operation of regional training centers.



Today, our headquarters, including training academy facilities, is located on the University of Maryland, College Park Campus. In addition, we have regional training centers located in Edgewood, Cresaptown, Mt. Airy, Centreville, Princess Anne, and La Plata. We utilize over six hundred state-certified instructors serving as part-time faculty support and more than sixty full-time faculty and staff.

The MFRI organization is comprised of six sections, working together to deliver services to a wide variety of customers. The Administrative Services Section is responsible for a variety of financial and

personnel-related activities which provide a solid base of support to the overall mission of the Institute. The Advanced Life Support Section delivers advanced life support continuing education programs statewide. Field Operations is responsible for the delivery of training programs throughout the various regions of Maryland. The Institute Development Section is constantly providing new and revised education and training programs to reflect the current dynamics within the emergency services. The Logistical Support Section is responsible for the oper-

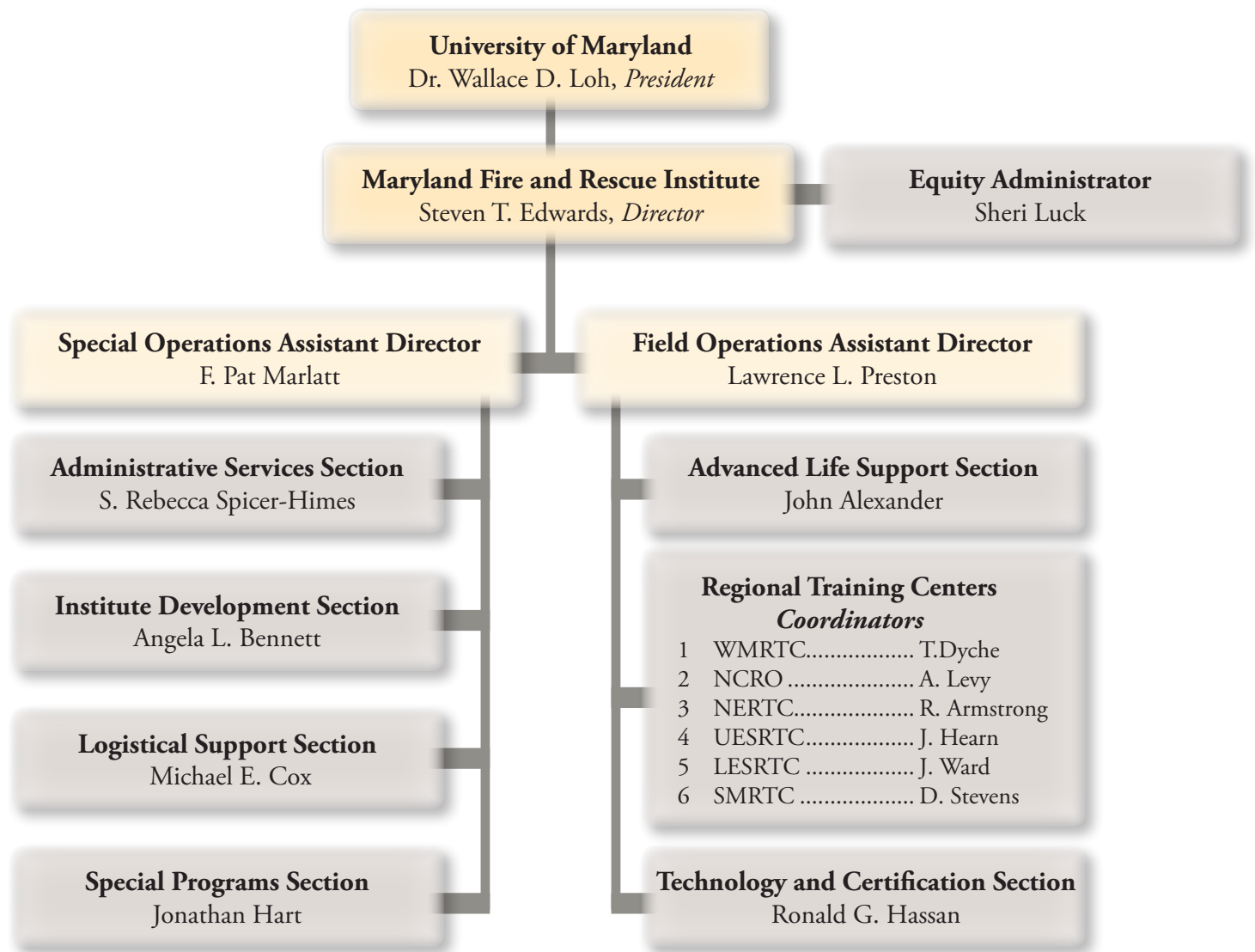
ation and maintenance of the regional training centers, equipment, vehicles, and props. The Special Programs Section provides consulting and training services to industry and government in safety, regulatory compliance, and emergency response. The Technology and Certification Section maintains the technology resources of the Institute as well as supporting the day-to-day operation of the Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board.



In fiscal year 2014, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute provided training to 35,663 students in 1,732 fire, rescue, EMS, Advanced Life Support, hazardous materials, management and other specialized programs. MFRI works closely with and in cooperation with local fire training academies at the county level, as well as numerous other statewide emergency service organizations.

# MFRI Organization Chart

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*June 2015*





# MISSION/VISION/VALUES

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## Mission

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) of the University of Maryland is the state's comprehensive training and education system for emergency services. The Institute plans, researches, develops, and delivers quality programs to enhance the ability of emergency service providers to protect life, the environment, and property.

## Vision

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute is and will continue to be a premier emergency services education organization by developing and delivering high-quality training. We will constantly evolve to address developing trends and needs in emergency services training.

## Values

Core values support the mission, shape our culture and reflect that which is important to the Institute.

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|-----------------------|--|
| ❑ Student Success     | Ensure student success by actively motivating and supporting students.   |
| ❑ Safety              | Maintain strict safety standards to ensure the well-being of our students and instructors.   |
| ❑ Academic Excellence | Ensure all training courses are of the highest possible quality.   |
| ❑ Integrity           | Operate according to the highest ethical principles.   |
| ❑ Professionalism     | Ensure that all faculty, staff and instructors conduct themselves professionally.  |
| ❑ Diversity/Equity    | Ensure that services are equally available to all and that the diverse group of faculty/staff, instructors and students are treated with respect and fairness. |
| ❑ Responsibility      | Be accountable to customers, both internal and external, for the services provided.  |





# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute is a forward-thinking and innovative organization whose vision positions us as a premier emergency services training organization. To do this requires that we continually address developing trends and needs within emergency services training. The Institute's 2025 Strategic Plan is a means to achieve progressive change to ensure this vision is achieved.

Efforts towards this strategic plan began in July 2014 with the establishment of a planning team followed by a thorough literature review that included an analysis of other relevant strategic plans. In addition, an internal assessment was completed to identify the benchmarks historically used to measure our success.

Next, an online survey was distributed to seek input from our stakeholders and to assess our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. To maximize the survey's effectiveness, portions of the survey were specifically tailored for our students, instructors, faculty/staff, customers of our government services section, and other stakeholders. Nearly 500 individuals responded to the online survey. The survey results were very informative and provided various viewpoints and opinions on the current services provided by MFRI. This information was utilized to identify the important issues to be further analyzed in subsequent planning steps.

Following the survey, a management consultant experienced in strategic planning who was not affiliated with our organization served as a facilitator for ten different focus group meetings representing numerous stakeholders. Like the online survey, the purpose of the focus groups was to seek input from our stakeholders and to assess our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Examples of stakeholders included faculty/staff; field instructors; representatives from the Maryland State Firemen's Association, the Maryland Council of Fire and Rescue Academies, the Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board, the Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board, the Maryland Fire Rescue Education Training Commission, the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; and numerous University of Maryland campus partners including representatives from staff relations, human resources, procurement, facilities maintenance, life safety and others.

Following the online survey and focus group meetings, a two-day retreat was scheduled and facilitated by a management consultant experienced in strategic planning and not affiliated with our organization. The purpose of the retreat was to review all of the data and other information gathered and to help identify key areas for improvement as well as general planning objectives that would serve as key components of our strategic plan. Approximately 40 individuals representing a wide array of stakeholders participated in the retreat.

Following the retreat another diverse team of stakeholders reviewed our current mission statement and, in addition, established our vision and core values. Finally, a draft document was circulated for comment among our stakeholder groups that included specific strategic goals and operational objectives. The final report offered today is the result of this entire process.

The Institute's overall strategic planning effort is intended to be continuous and dynamic, recognizing today's changing environment. The strategic planning process provided key strategies and objectives that will allow the Institute to better fulfill its mission in the future.

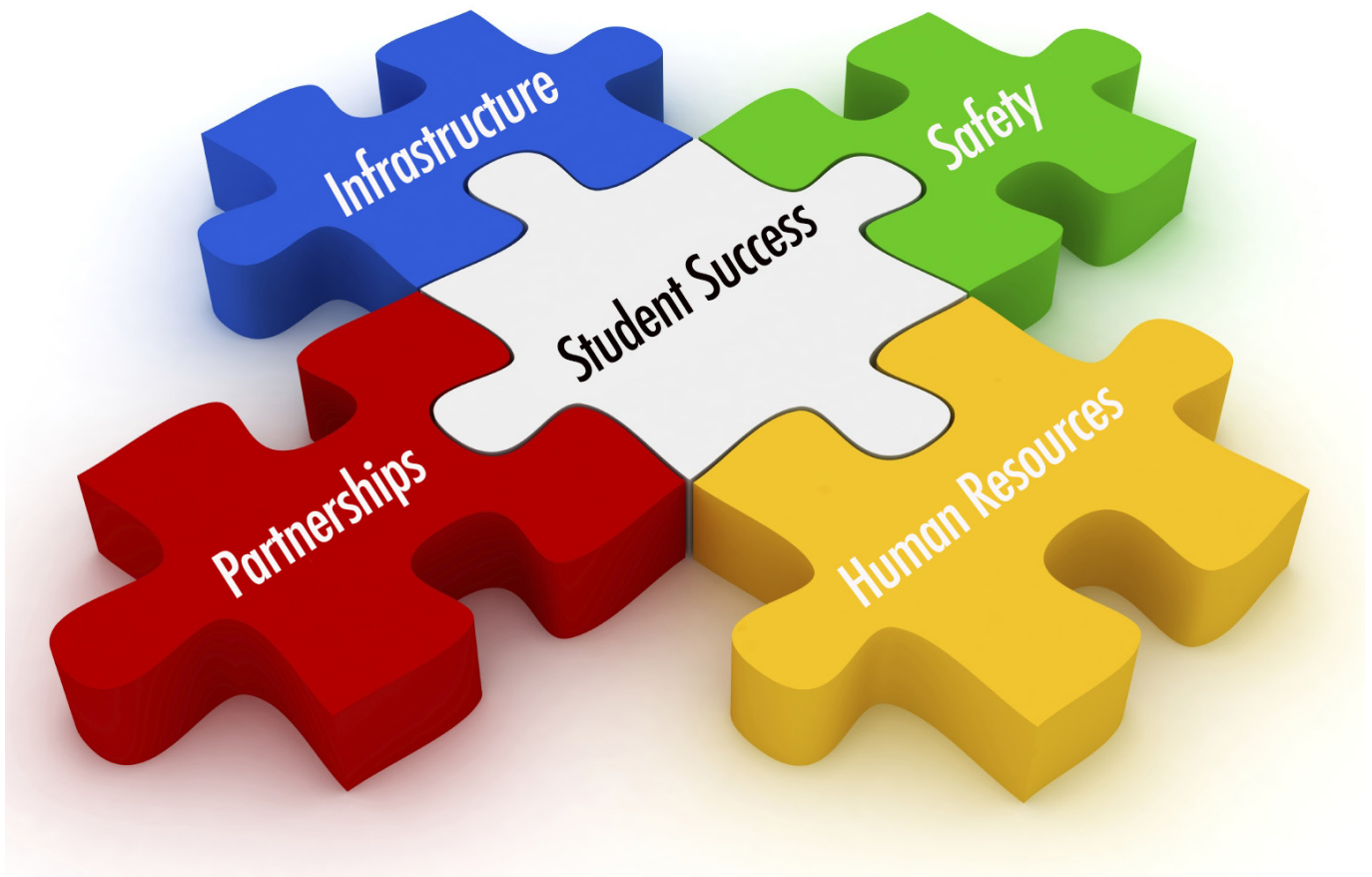


## STRATEGIC GOALS

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The focus of the Institute's efforts will help align ourselves and concentrate our efforts towards five primary goals with the focus centered upon student success. These goals represent areas in which we will move forward to a more prosperous future for our students, staff and other partners. We plan to utilize a variety of performance measures and indicators to evaluate our progress. Performance measures will be monitored and updated as objectives and programs evolve.

- ❑ Student Success      Promote a culture focused on student success.
- ❑ Safety                Integrate a culture of safety throughout all aspects of operations.
- ❑ Infrastructure        Ensure that our facilities and equipment will meet our future needs.
- ❑ Human Resources    Ensure an adequate and diverse workforce of faculty, staff and instructors who communicate effectively and act in a professional manner with the highest levels of integrity.
- ❑ Partnerships        Focus on partnerships to ensure that we effectively understand our customers, stakeholders and others who can help us achieve success.



## Goal 1 - Promote a culture focused on student success.

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute believes our future success must be focused on student success. Without a major focus on students, our mission of enhancing the ability of emergency services providers to protect life, the environment and property cannot be a reality. To achieve this goal, a number of strategic objectives have been identified.

### *Strategic Objectives*

#### STUDENT SUCCESS

- Develop a new student orientation program that encompasses expectations, technologies, policies, academic integrity standards and skills for student success.
- Expand access to online resources and assistance for students to include full implementation of commercially available resources to support EMT courses, investment in a more interactive and user-friendly Learning Management System and development of online micro-learning sessions to enhance and support existing training programs.
- Establish a “MFRI Student Council” to provide valuable feedback to the Institute.
- Provide student advocates to assist those facing academic challenges.
- Review the existing policies on class size to include an evaluation of the minimum number of students required to start and continue classes.
- Enhance professional development opportunities and monitor the performance of MFRI instructors to ensure consistency in the delivery of training programs.

#### CURRICULUM AND TESTING

- Incorporate the latest trends in instructional design into the curriculum development process including personalized learning, cognitive load theory, social learning, nano learning and gamification.
- Invest in a comprehensive learning management system that supports highly interactive online course delivery



■ Incorporate emerging technology into the design and delivery of curriculum to increase interaction and enhance learning including additional online course offerings, expansion of the Incident Command Simulation Center, mobile learning, student response systems, computer based testing, virtual reality technologies and learning analytics.

- Invest in a test management system that will allow the Institute to provide detailed feedback and mastery reports to students and instructors.

■ Evaluate the use of electronic resources in addition to or in lieu of printed text when available.

## TECHNOLOGY

- Develop and maintain a long-term plan that identifies the Institute's technology needs and plans for the maintenance and replacement of these resources including computers, audio-visual equipment, simulators, and related equipment.

- Expand the capabilities of the Incident Command Simulation Center through the addition of more mobile units and formalization of facilitator training.

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While the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute has an excellent history of providing a safe training environment, national statistics suggest that approximately 10% of the firefighter fatalities across the country and more than 5,000 injuries occur during training each year. It is imperative that the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute take all conceivable actions to ensure a safe training environment for our students and instructors.

- Develop and adopt a formal risk management plan that identifies associated risks during emergency service training as well as appropriate risk reduction strategies designed to limit and/or substantially address those risks. Communicate this plan to our students and instructors and ensure compliance with all aspects of the plan throughout the Institute.
- Reevaluate the program implemented several years ago that requires students to have medical clearance prior to participating in selected classes. Continue to update data to help identify possible improvements or changes to this program.
- Reevaluate the current medical clearance program for instructors that requires periodic medical clearance






based upon the age of the individual to ensure it continues to provide a good screening tool to help ensure medical readiness.

- Continue to utilize the Institute's Risk Management Committee to review potential risks and the circumstances of any injuries that occur and communicate findings to instructors, faculty and staff.
- Provide adequate initial and ongoing safety training for all individuals. Topics should include a wide array of health/safety/fitness issues of concern to our students and instructors.
- Incorporate the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation's 16 Life Safety Initiatives, which were designed by numerous national fire service organizations to reduce the risk of firefighter injury and death, within our curriculum and operational procedures.
- Continue to work with the University's Center for Firefighter Safety Research and Development on a wide array of firefighter health/safety issues, which in the past have addressed such topics as firefighter locator systems, various aspects of the protective ensemble and other relevant topics. Share these findings with the fire service community.
- Develop a scientifically validated fuel load designed to provide for safe and educationally sound environments during live fire training.

### Goal 3 - Ensure our system of facilities and associated equipment meets our future needs.

In 1975, initiatives began to provide regional training centers throughout the State of Maryland. Currently, we have six full-service regional training centers. Focus must be centered on whether this quantity remains adequate and whether additional upgrades in equipment, supplies and other logistical requirements are necessary to meet our current and future needs.

#### *Strategic Objectives*

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- Develop an ongoing assessment plan that verifies that the current number and locations of regional training centers meets the needs of our customers.
  - Evaluate the capabilities of existing training facilities and recommend upgrades as appropriate. This effort should begin with the oldest original facility, the Western Maryland Regional Training Center.
  - Develop an assessment plan that identifies and provides for the repair and/or replacement of any current item requiring attention.
  - Develop a program that ensures that protective equipment ensemble elements are properly cleaned and repaired in a timely fashion.
  - Continue to focus and develop the Institute's Incident Command Simulation Center and pursue a broader target audience.

■ Evaluate the success of the current trailer-based program that provides supplies and materials for a variety of classes such as hazardous materials, confined space and others and determine whether this is effective as opposed to permanently providing resources on site at each regional training center.

■ Establish a plan to replace sprayed-on linings in burn rooms with high temperature panels or tiles that have proven to be more durable and cost effective.

■ Develop an ongoing assessment plan that identifies and provides for any new props and equipment. Special consideration should focus on car props for each region and the construction of emergency vehicle driver training courses.

■ Continue to utilize all appropriate grants to help support the provision of facilities, props and equipment.

■ Develop a plan to provide and maintain appropriate personal protective equipment for all instructors, including PPE and SCBA.

■ Evaluate the contents of the BLS and ALS teaching kits regularly and ensure that the equipment is appropriate, in good repair and available in adequate quantities to support associated classes.

■ Reevaluate the existing plan for the replacement and maintenance of the medical simulation resources and explore additional opportunities to integrate medical simulation into the curriculum.

■ Design and construct specialized props to support specialty classes such as Trench Rescue Technician, Confined Space Rescue Technician, Hazardous Materials Technician, and Structural Collapse Technician.

■ Evaluate the contents of all teaching kits and ensure that the equipment is appropriate, representative of the equipment students will encounter during emergency operations, in good repair and in adequate quantities to support associated classes.



**Goal 4 - Ensure an adequate and diverse workforce of faculty, staff and instructors who communicate effectively and act in a professional manner with the highest levels of integrity.**

The Institute's faculty, staff and instructors represent the most important asset MFRI has to help achieve our mission. Without focus and investment in this important area, strategic success cannot be achieved.



## Strategic Objectives

## HUMAN RESOURCES

- Develop and maintain an ongoing assessment plan that identifies faculty, staff and instructor needs.
- Develop a formal recruitment and retention plan with the goal of having a qualified and diverse work force.
- Review/enhance the Institute's faculty/staff orientation program.
- Develop an instructor orientation program that emphasizes expectations, technologies, policies, academic integrity standards and skills for instructor success.



- Develop and deliver quarterly online Professional Development for Instructors.
- Develop a formalized succession plan that emphasizes cross-training and redundancy of knowledge and skills to ensure continuity of operations.
- Review and enhance the current instructor mentor program.
- Review and enhance the current quality assurance program.
- Evaluate the compensation and benefits for field instructors and faculty/staff and benchmark against similar organizations.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Formalize the Institute's expectations with regard to customer service and ensure opportunities are taken whenever possible to have direct contact with students, instructors and stakeholders.



- Update the Institute's website to utilize more current and interactive technology.
- Develop a social media marketing plan and utilize all appropriate forms of social media to enhance communications.
- Re-examine current methods of communication including the Instructor Zone and Student Zone interface and enhance as appropriate to ensure effective and timely communication.
- Develop a formalized orientation program for students, instructors and stakeholders.
- Distribute an electronic newsletter including issues of specific importance to our instructors and stakeholders.

## Goal 5 - Ensure the Institute effectively manages, markets and conveys the value of MFRI's programs and services to its students, partners and stakeholders.



Partnerships provide opportunities to achieve what may otherwise not be possible. In fact, true synergy becomes a reality when cooperation produces a combined effect greater than the sum of individual efforts. The synergy that the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute has been privileged to experience has played a major role in the success we have enjoyed over our 85-year history. Recognizing the importance of these partnerships and appropriate marketing is critical to the success of all we hope to achieve in the future.

### *Strategic Objectives*

- Establish effective orientation programs for students, partners and stakeholders.
- Evaluate the current partners utilized by each section within the Institute, their purpose and the effectiveness of their relationship, and determine the need for

additional partners.

- Evaluate the extent to which the Institute currently partners with others to ensure a win/win relationship.
- Provide opportunities for current partners to become more integrated into the Institute.
- Develop a marketing/branding strategy to ensure an effective means for advertising and media management.
- Re-evaluate the existing business plan for the Special Programs Section to ensure that all potential partnerships and client bases are adequately covered.





■ Continue existing partnerships with the National Fire Academy (NFA) and other national organizations to offer local delivery of selected classes and work to actively promote these training opportunities throughout the state.

## CONCLUSION

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The MFRI 2025 Strategic Plan is a true collaborative effort of the community that we serve. It re-examines our mission and vision and offers a perspective for our constituents of who we are, the values that will guide us and our future as we see it. We believe the five strategic goals offered will serve as a roadmap to guide our priorities, decisions, and allocation of resources and will help us to be recognized as a premier fire service education organization.

## Our sincere thanks to the following participating organizations /individuals

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*Maryland State Firemen's Association*

*Maryland Council of Fire and Rescue Academies*

*Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board*

*Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board*

*Maryland Fire Rescue Education Training Commission*

*Maryland Fire Chiefs Association*

*Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems*

*University of Maryland Campus partners*

*MFRI Students and Instructors*

*MFRI Faculty and Staff*

*Dr. Burton Clark, Management Consultant*

*Special thanks to Allen Williams and Angela Bennett of MFRI who served as the MFRI 2025 Strategic Plan project coordinators.*









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[www.mfri.org](http://www.mfri.org)